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COMMISSION ON HUMAN RIGHTS
Sub-Commission on Prevention of
Discrimination and Protection
of Minorities
Forty-fifth session
Item 6 of the provisional agenda

QUESTION OF THE VIOLATION OF HUMAN RIGHTS AND FUNDAMENTAL FREEDOMS, INCLUDING POLICIES OF RACIAL DISCRIMINATION AND SEGREGATION AND OF APARTHEID, IN ALL COUNTRIES, WITH PARTICULAR REFERENCE TO COLONIAL AND OTHER DEPENDENT COUNTRIES AND TERRITORIES: REPORT OF THE SUB-COMMISSION UNDER COMMISSION ON HUMAN RIGHTS RESOLUTION 8 (XXIII)1

Joint written statement submitted by the World Confederation of Labour and the World Federation of Trade Unions, non-governmental organizations in consultative status category I; American Association of Jurists, International Association for Religious Freedom, International Association of Democratic Lawyers, International Association of Penal Law, Pax Christi International, Pax Romana and Women's International League for Peace and Freedom, non-governmental organizations in consultative status, category II; Centre Europe-Tiers Monde, International Educational Development, International Falcon Movement, International Movement Against all Forms of Discrimination and Racism, Movement against Racism and for Friendship among Peoples, and World Organization against Torture, non-governmental organizations on the Roster

The Secretary-General has received the following written statement which is distributed in accordance with Economic and Social Council resolution 1296 (XLIV).

[6 August 1993]

The situation of women in the Islamic Republic of Iran

"Equality does not take precedence over justice ... justice does not mean that all laws must be the same for men and for women. One of the mistakes that Westerners make is to forget this ... The difference in the stature, vitality, voice, development, muscular quality and physical strength of men and women shows that men are stronger and more capable in all fields ... Men's brains are bigger ... Men are more inclined to fight and women are more excitable ... Men are inclined to reasoning and rationalism, whereas women have a fundamental tendency to be emotional. The tendency to protect is stronger in men ... whereas most women like to be protected. Such differences affect the delegation of responsibilities, duties and rights."

Hashemi Rafsanjani, President of the Islamic Republic of Iran.

1. Indisputably, these few remarks clearly explain the situation and, in a word, the status of women in the Islamic Republic of Iran. It is a status of legalized inferiority.

2. In recent years, each time the question of human rights violations has been brought before the international bodies concerned, including the Sub-Committee on Prevention of Discrimination and Protection of Minorities, humanitarian organizations have pointed to the extent of the repression and violations of the most elementary human rights in Iran, in particular in relation to women.

3. The dual repression of which women in Iran are victims has always been given special attention. Currently, the information and reports relayed almost daily by international press agencies confirm the bitter reality. The situation of women in Iran is deteriorating to an unprecedented degree.

4. Hardly a day passes without reports of hundreds of women being arrested and flogged in public. The tragic psychological consequences are easily imagined. To grasp the extent of the repression and the present circumstances it is sufficient to look at the suicide figures.

5. The United Nations Human Rights Committee has just examined the report of the Government of the Islamic Republic of Iran. The status of women and the discrimination which they suffer were considered by the Committee's experts. At the same time, a wave of arbitrary arrests took place in Iran under the pretext of combating corruption and the improper wearing of the veil. Does not the timing of these arrests to coincide with a presidential election which was boycotted by the population indicate that the Iranian authorities are settling scores with a population which refused to take part in the vote, thereby expressing its profound discontent?

6. At the most recent session of the Human Rights Committee, the Iranian delegation tried to convince the experts that measures were under way, including measures in Parliament, to improve the status of women. However, on 1 August, press agencies reported that the Iranian Parliament had opposed

sending unmarried women doctors to exercise their profession in the West (AFP, 1 August 1993). Moreover, the Office of the President of the Republic issued instructions to all public services and departments calling upon them rigorously to enforce the compulsory code of dress for their employees as well as their clients. The instruction stated that ministers would be held directly responsible for the enforcement of those laws and threatened them with harsh measures in the event of the slightest violation.

7. During this time a new patrol force comprising 330,000 militants was set up to check on the population, under the pretext of "combating corruption"! (AFP, 18 July 1993). At the same time, the mullah Mohammad Yazdi, head of the Iranian Judiciary, officially announced in his sermon on Friday, 30 July that the number of women in employment had fallen from 1,200,000 in 1977 to 980,000 in 1987. Although he did not say how far that figure had fallen since, if the size of the population, which increased from 40 million to 65 million over the same period, is taken into consideration, it is clear that women have been removed from active employment much more rapidly that the mullahs admit.

8. These are a few examples which make it impossible for us to believe the promises of the religious dictatorship in power in Iran. The worsening violation of women's rights further reveals the need to support appeals for international bodies to condemn this situation, such as those launched by Mrs. Maryam Rajavi, an eminent figure in the Iranian resistance, who is forcefully appealing for assistance to the oppressed women of Iran.

9. Consequently, in accordance with these appeals, we draw the attention of the Sub-Commission to the gravity of violations of human rights, and particularly women's rights, in Iran. We appeal for immediate action to put an end to this situation. After so many resolutions which have remained a dead letter, we declare our support for the idea of submitting the question of human rights violations in Iran to the United Nations Security Council so that effective and immediate decisions may be taken to oblige the Iranian regime to respect those rights.